

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01406 281332Z

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1844

S E C R E T TUNIS 1406

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

1. I HAVE SENT SEPARATELY A REPORT ON MY MEETINGS HERE. THEY PROVIDE SOME PERCEPTIVE INSIGHTS INTO THE FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES WE ARE DEALING WITH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, AND I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SCAN THEM.

2. I ALSO HOPE YOU WILL SUPPORT MY RECOMMENDATION THAT WE BE APPROPRIATELY REPRESENTED AT TUNISIA'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ITS INDEPENDENCE MARCH 20. IT IS APPARENT THAT BOURGUIBA, IN THE DECLINING YEARS OF HIS FORTY-YEAR LEADERSHIP OF HIS NATION, IS LOOKING FOR GESTURES OF SUPPORT FOR HIS PRAGMATIC AND MODERATE POLICIES THAT HE BELIEVES HAVE CHARTED A WISE COURSE FOR THIS REGION OVER THE LONG RUN. TUNISIANS KNOW THAT THEY DO NOT CARRY GREAT WEIGHT IN THE AREA TODAY, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN A VOICE OF REASON FOR A LONG TIME. I THINK SOME RECOGNITION OF THIS THROUGH APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION AT MARCH 20 CELEBRATIONS WILL BE FAVORABLY NOTED IN AREA.

3. IF IT CAN BE WORKED INTO HIS SCHEDULE, A FEW HOURS STOPOVER BY THE VICE PRESIDENT ON MARCH 20 AS

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PART OF HIS ROUND-THE-WORLD TRIP WOULD BE A SMALL

INVESTMENT WITH VERY LARGE POLITICAL AND PSYCHO-
LOGICAL DIVIDENDS. IF THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE, AND
IF YOU CANNOT COME HERE IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN
AFRICAN TRIP, I VERY MUCH HOPE WE CAN HAVE A
DELEGATION HEADED BY ANOTHER CABINET OFFICER.
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